

Tsunami Public Affairs Working Group Report

Anchorage, AK, October 7-8, 1998

The July 17 Papua New Guinea tsunami increased the workload of all members of the public affairs working group. Researching data, responding to media inquiries, and setting up interviews kept everyone busy even as we shared the sorrows of those who were impacted by the event. Media interest culminated in a NOAA-sponsored briefing at the National Press Club on July 28 in Washington, D.C, in which several PAWG members participated. Details of the press briefing are summarized below as well as state-by-state tsunami outreach activities since the April federal/state steering group meeting in Honolulu. The PAWG continues to hold periodic conference calls and stay in contact via email.

Tsunami Press Briefing

The press briefing focused on federal and state efforts to warn U.S. residents of tsunamis and mitigate their impact. Participants included Eddie Bernard, director of NOAA's Pacific Marine Environment Lab; Chip McCreery, director of the Pacific Tsunami Warning Center; Tom Sokolowski, director of the West Coast/Alaska Tsunami Warning Center; and Don Hull, Oregon state geologist.

Reporters were provided a press kit containing a wide range of background on tsunami safety and the federal-state effort to warn of tsunamis and mitigate destruction and a 6-minute video illustrating the Papua New Guinea tsunami and a tsunami buoy deployment. The briefing was attended by a small group of reporters, most notably Eric Selzmen of the CBS Evening News, which broadcast a short report; Curt Supplee of the Washington Post, which plans a future "Horizon" report on tsunamis; and Randy Schmid of Associated Press, whose report appeared in over 100 newspapers nationwide. A comprehensive list of media contacts following the PNG tsunami is attached.

The press briefing was organized by National Weather Service senior public affairs officer Randee Exler and Oceanic and Atmospheric Research senior public affairs officer Dane Konop, with the assistance of NWS-Alaska public affairs officer Ruth Barritt, NWS-western region public affairs officer Marilu Trainor, and NWS-Pacific region public affairs officer Delores Clark, who came in off annual leave to attend.

Two new flyers were prepared for the press kit: NOAA Backgrounder on Tsunamis and NOAA

Backgrounder on NOAA and the U.S. Tsunami Program.

Hawaii Tsunami Outreach Activities

Delores Clark promoted the Pacific Tsunami Warning Center at two community events during May. The Ewa Beach Limu Festival drew 5,000 people; many visited the PTWC exhibit booth to pick up literature and enter the drawing for the tsunami cup. Safety preparedness materials were distributed at the Ewa Beach Walk rest stations, designated stops in a community walk. Information on both tsunami warning centers and the national program was provided at the National Oceans Conference in Monterey, California, as part of the press packets. Visitors to the Pacific Tsunami Warning Center included several Hawaii schools, the Senior Chinese Community Club, Bill Kurtis Production Company for an upcoming program on the A&E Channel, and the PBS Kid Science program filming for an upcoming series called Ocean Quest.

Autographed framed copies of the Mark Trail tsunami story are now on display at the NWS Pacific Region Headquarters, Pacific Tsunami Warning Center, Pacific Marine Environment Lab, Pacific Tsunami Museum, and the West Coast/Alaska Tsunami Warning Center. Photos and stories appeared in the NOAA Report and Commerce People newsletters.

With funding provided by the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program, a partnership between FEMA and Hawaii State Civil Defense, 50,000 tsunami coloring books were printed and distributed to Isle schools during May.

Washington State Tsunami Outreach Activities

Ann Thomason distributed the National Tsunami Mitigation Program brochure to all members of the steering group and PAWG. An Adobe Acrobat (PDF) version was placed on the website for easy download and printing. She also distributed reprints of Eddie Bernard's article in EOS Magazine, "A Program Aims to Reduce Impacts of Tsunamis on Pacific States."

Associated Press Rory Marshall's April tsunami article was picked up by many newspapers and generated many interviews with the steering group members. Eddie Bernard was interviewed on NBC Nightline, NBC News, C-Span School Bus, the Learning Channel, and MSNBC web site. More recent press interviews with Dr. Bernard included an August USA Today article, "Northwest is Ahead of the Waves," and a Seattle KIRO-TV for a documentary to air in late September.

Mike Howard issued several press releases and FEMA Radio Network interviews following the PNG tsunami.

In April, two National Weather Service Forecast Office (NWSFO) Seattle-Tacoma staff participated in the Clallam County Tsunami workshop sponsored by Washington State Emergency Management and FEMA. Per Ted Buehner, the Warning Coordination Meteorologist (WCM), about 110 people participated from Oregon, Washington, Alaska, and British Columbia. Participants included all Washington coastal county emergency managers, several western interior county emergency managers, representatives from FEMA, USGS, USCG, Washington Dept. of Fish and Wildlife, Dept of Natural Resources, Dept of Transportation including Ferries, and Washington State Patrol. Local agencies included the American Red Cross, local and county law enforcement and fire personnel, public utilities, several tribes, schools, hospitals, public works and road departments, several companies and industries churches, and volunteers like amateur radio. The workshop was video taped by TV-W (TV - Washington) for later broadcast on the state cable network. Other media in attendance included a representative for Pacific NW public radio, KONP - Port Angeles, KVAC - Forks, the Port Angeles Journal, and the Peninsula Daily News. NWS staff were interviewed by public radio, KONP, and the Peninsula Daily News regarding the tsunami warning system and dissemination of tsunami messages.

In May, Jefferson County held a much smaller scale tsunami workshop in the wake of the April event. WCM Ted Buehner presented the tsunami warning system material.

In July, Island County held a tsunami workshop for about 70 participants. NWSFO Seattle staff presented tsunami warning system material. KSTW-TV Seattle attended but did not interview NWS Staff.

NWSFO Seattle has requested membership on the Washington Emergency Management committee on tsunami preparedness.

Oregon Tsunami Outreach Activities

The Oregon Department of Geology and Minerals (DOGAMI) and the Oregon Emergency Management (OEM) agency continue to make progress with tsunami inundation and evacuation maps, placement of interpretative markers, education efforts with schools, and development of educational products. In June, about 75-100 people attended a tsunami workshop for coastal communities that addressed warning, evacuation, resources, and structural issues. The meeting was covered in the Florence newspaper. Filming along the Oregon coastline for an educational video to be used in grades 4-12 was completed in June. Several newspapers carried stories and Inside Edition used footage for a tsunami segment. In July, Lincoln County newspapers covered evacuation route planning for schools and communities along the coast. The Astoria and Seaside paper carried a story about the release of the Seaside-Gearhart tsunami map. The Oregonian paper carried two full page tsunami articles on September 9.

National Weather Service coastal offices reported the following tsunami outreach.

Dan Keeton, WCM, at NWSFO Portland, is a member of the Oregon State Tsunami Warning System subcommittee which was formed after a state-wide tsunami workshop in July. It's purpose is to design different types of warning dissemination systems for local communities (such as sirens, signage, etc.).

The NWSFO Medford WCM participates in the Douglas County Tsunami Emergency Action Plan Committee. They recently completed a set of responsibilities and operational requirements for county government during tsunami events. They also developed guidance for residents and visitors in potentially impacted coastal areas.

California Tsunami Outreach Efforts

John Lovegrove, WCM, NWSFO Eureka, represents the NWS in the Redwood Coast Tsunami Workgroup. John produced a narrated computer slide show that is running in the Humboldt State University Natural History Museum in Arcata. The group's activities are listed on their website courtesy of the NWS office in Eureka. Some recent achievements include work on a new brochure entitled "Tsunami Mitigation Efforts on California's North Coast." A Jedediah State Park trail map now includes a tsunami information box. The box includes information on what a tsunami is, what to do, and the tsunami hazard logo. As new park maps get reprinted, tsunami information boxes will be included. Tsunami information flyers are now posted at the kiosks at Freshwater Lagoon. The group is developing plans for specific sign locations.

Since April, the NWSFO San Francisco Bay Area staff has briefed constituents, media, and customers on the impacts of El Nino and La Nina. A briefings included a segment on the potential impact of tsunamis on the West Coast. Staff also participate in monthly tsunami drills.

NWSFO Los Angeles participates in annual tsunami drills with each county's Operation of Emergency Services (OES) office. The public is not involved. Presently, there are no tsunami preparedness committees in southern California.

San Diego WCM Ed Clark is getting more involved with the statewide Tsunami Steering Committee. Local contacts are Susan Asturias, San Diego Office of Disaster Preparedness and Chris Bach, City of San Diego.

Alaska Tsunami Outreach Activities

The state is aggressively completing inundation and evacuation mapping for Kodiak, the pilot project for a larger effort to evaluate between 10-40 more sites. New sites will be considered as funding permits. Standardized signs have been adopted for used in tsunami prone areas.

Educational materials are being distributed to local communities, schools, businesses, and other requesting organizations. The state recently put \$6000 into new materials.

Tsunami Media Blitz

The following is a list of media contacts following the July 17, 1998, Papua New Guinea Tsunami:

Eddie Bernard:

ABC World News Tonight with Peter Jennings, A Closer Look/July 20
PBS Live/Jim Lehrer Hour/July 20
KOMO TV (ABC) Seattle /11 a.m. and 5 p.m. newscasts/July 20
KOMO Radio live interview/ 4:08 p.m./July 20.
KPCC Radio "Talk of the City"/Los Angeles/July 21
Seattle Times/background article/July 20
Discovery Channel Canada: background information/tsunami web page
Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Radio Network
CBS News/ background information on tsunamis
CBS Radio/short interview on possible west coast tsunami
EXTRA TV Program: provided background info
Red Cross/ web site: Disaster.Relief.org
Associated Press Science Editor for tsunami information
Miami Sun Times
San Francisco Examiner
Science News Magazine
KIRO TV Seattle (CBS) - hour documentary to air late September
USA Today, Pat McMahon

Frank González:

National Public Radio "The Environment Show"/July 24; see web site
<http://www.enn.comm/envshow/> "Real Audio"
NPR Morning Edition
San Mateo County Times/Michael Copeland/July 22
San Diego Herald/ Eric Niiler/July 29
Monterey Herald/Judy Marks

Robert Kamphaus:

North County Times, San Diego, CA.
San Mateo County Times re inundation maps
Los Angeles Times, Orange County edition about tsunami maps for that area

David Oppenheimer:

10-minute piece on tsunamis for CNN International interviews for 4 San Francisco Bay Area TV stations (Channels 2,4, 5, and 7).
San Mateo Times for an article about risk of tsunami for the Bay Area.

Lori Dengler:

Orange County Register, Orange Co. CA
Times Standard, Eureka
San Mateo County Times
Monterey Herald
Disaster Relief, a relief agency that specializes in web pages. See their tsunami story at:
<http://www.DisasterRelief.org/Disasters/980720tsunami/>
contributed to an Associated Press release
KPCC NPR Radio, Los Angeles, Air Talk

Rich Eisner:

KNX radio in LA and NBC Nightline; interest generated as a result of Rory Marshall's AP story

Don Hull and DOGAMI:

Portland KPTV 12, Kathy Smith-Tsunamis-Clark
Astorian, S. Forrester/Brad B.-Tsunami/Seaside-Don/George/Clark
Seaside Signal, J.Rucker/Bill-Tsunami/Seaside-George/Clark
San Francisco Examiner, Keay Davidson-Tsunamis-Don
Lincoln City News Guard, Rosie-Tsunamis-Clark
Oregonian, Phil Cogswell, Portland-Tsunamis-Don
Tillamook Headlight-Herald, John Ponce-Tsunamis-Clark
Portland KEX, Royal Gunning-Tsunamis-Clark
Eugene KPNW, Barbara Dellenbach-Tsunamis-Clark
Portland Knews Radio, Jenelle Winter-Tsunamis-Clark

George Crawford:

30 minute live radio interview with KBKW (Rolling Thunder) a 7-station network, with Tim Walsh
KIRO TV Channel 7 (CBS) Seattle, for a 1-hour documentary on earthquakes, tsunamis and

volcanoes to air in late September

Mark Darienzo:

Oregon Emergency Management/DOGAMI issued a joint press release on July 24, subject: Tsunamis in Oregon.

West Coast/Alaska Tsunami Warning Center/ Paul Whitmore:

BBC News, London, England
AM Radio 1000 Chicago
Discovery Channel, Canada web site
Eric Salzman, CBS News
Channel 11 News Anchorage
KGTV San Diego
Channel 2 News San Francisco
Dave Tannenbaum, The Y Files
Bill Cook, Orlando, Florida
Schlegel TV, Berlin, Germany
Barry Farber, AM Talk Radio
Newport Beach California newspaper
Ketchikan Daily News
Chuck Gustufson, AM Talk Radio
CBS News Fresno, California
Stan Boney, Youngstown, Ohio newspaper

International Tsunami Information Center/ Michael Blackford:

Trish Fitzgerald-Radio Nat'l Australia
Susan Severid-AP International
Jane Smith-BBC World TV
John Nielson-NPR Washington
Tamar Simon-Discovery Canada
Matt Fields-TV Extra Los Angeles
Colette Beaudry-Beyond Productions Australia
Keith Sharon-Orange County (CA) Register
Judy Farah-KBFF Radio Sacramento, CA,-on air interview

Pacific Tsunami Warning Center Contacts - Chip McCreery, Bill Bass, Stuart:

KHNL TV, Honolulu, Sue Shin-video interview taped for TV-Chip
L.A. Times, Ken Rich-telephone interview-print media-Chip

Honolulu Star Bulletin, Helen Alton-telephone interview-print media-Chip
Television New Zealand, Lee Taylor-telephone interview taped for TV-Chip
National Public Radio, John Nielson-telephone interview taped for radio-Chip
Radio National Australia, Peter Thompson-telephone interview live radio-Chip
KRTR Radio, Honolulu, Ramsey Wharton-telephone interview taped for radio-Bill
Associated Press, L.A., Jane Allen-telephone interview print media-Chip
CBS Evening News, Jim Moore-telephone query background info-Chip
Big Island Radio, Chris Loos-telephone interview taped for radio-Chip
Associated Press, Honolulu, Mike Tighe-telephone interview print media-Stuart
KPLZ, San Antonio, Julie Glenn-requested information-left message only-Bill
Agence France Presse, Michael Field-telephone interview print media-Chip
KPCC Radio, Pasadena, Larry Mantle-telephone interview live radio-Chip
Science News Magazine, Richard Monastersky-telephone interview print media-Stuart
Rodale's Scuba Diving Magazine, Karen Shelanski, phone interview, fall issue-Chip
SuperScience Magazine (for kids), Felicia Chow, fast check of tsunami article-Chip